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Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/2 of 17 October 1997, in which the Assembly invited the Secretary-General to, *inter alia*, continue to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACTC). The framework for and modalities of this cooperation have been set out in a cooperation agreement which was signed on 25 June 1997 in New York by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of ACTC.

2. Since then, at their Summit held in Hanoi on 15 November 1997, the heads of State and Government of the 49 members of ACTC undertook a number of institutional reforms and created a new organization, the International Organization of la Francophonie. La Francophonie is headed by a Secretary-General and ACTC has become the Organization's principal operator under the name of Agency of la Francophonie. On 18 December 1998, the United Nations General Assembly took note of this change in its decision 53/453 and decided to transfer to la Francophonie the observer status with the Assembly which it had granted to ACTC in its resolution 33/18 of 10 November 1978.

3. The Hanoi Summit adopted the Charter of la Francophonie, under which the Organization was assigned the objectives of assisting in the establishment and development of democracy, the prevention of conflicts, the strengthening of the rule of law and protection of human rights, the intensification of dialogue between cultures and civilizations, the establishment of closer ties among peoples and the strengthening of solidarity through multilateral cooperation activities with a view to promoting the growth of their economies. La Francophonie, which brings together "countries that use French as a common language", is committed to respecting the sovereignty of States and to observing the strictest neutrality in issues of domestic policy.

4. The institutional structure of la Francophonie consists of a supreme body, the Summit, which meets every two years under the chairmanship of the head of State or Government of the host country; the Ministerial Conference, which comprises the Minister for Foreign Affairs or the Minister responsible for francophone affairs of each member; the Standing Council, which consists of the personal representatives of the heads of State or Government; the Secretary-General, who is the political spokesman and official representative of la Francophonie at the international level; the Agency of la Francophonie, which is the principal operator of the cultural, scientific, technical, economic and legal cooperation programmes decided on by the Summit;

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and the International Assembly of French-speaking Parliamentarians, which is the Advisory Assembly of la Francophonie.

5. La Francophonie shall maintain permanent observer or representational missions to the United Nations in New York and Geneva, to the European Union in Brussels, and to the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa.

II. Political cooperation between secretariats

6. In the application of the agreement between the United Nations and ACTC of 25 June 1997, political issues constitute one of the principal areas of cooperation. The transformation of ACTC into a regional organization, namely, la Francophonie, within the meaning of the Charter of the United Nations is a reaffirmation of the active role which la Francophonie intends to play in the field of preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution, consolidation of democracy, protection of human rights and strengthening of the rule of law. In all of these areas, cooperation between the two organizations takes place usually between their respective secretariats. Such cooperation mostly takes the form of regular contacts on issues that are being actively followed by the United Nations and la Francophonie, with exchanges of information and analyses and working meetings both between senior officials of the two organizations and at the expert level.

7. Upon assuming office on 1 January 1998, therefore, the Secretary-General of la Francophonie took the initiative to invite his counterparts from the principal regional and international organizations to the International Day of la Francophonie, which was commemorated in Paris on 20 March 1998. The United Nations was represented at the conference by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. The aim of this Conference was to introduce the new la Francophonie to the international community and to review the possibilities for cooperation and synergy between international organizations in the fields of peace, security and development. Participants in the conference included the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the British Commonwealth, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Council of Europe, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Organization of American States, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

8. As requested by the General Assembly in paragraph 9 of its resolution 52/2, I have included la Francophonie in the list of regional organizations whose heads I invite periodically to the Organization's Headquarters in New York for consultations.

9. La Francophonie thus participated for the first time in these biennial meetings on 28 and 29 July 1998. Participants in the 1998 meeting, the theme of which was cooperation for conflict prevention, included the heads of 15 regional organizations or their representatives and the Presidents of the General Assembly and Security Council. I presided over most of the meeting, which was attended by several senior officials of the Organization and heads of agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the Under-Secretaries-General for Political Affairs, Peacekeeping Operations, Humanitarian Affairs and Disarmament Affairs.

10. The United Nations and nine of the regional organizations represented at the meeting circulated to the participants, respectively, an annotated agenda and working documents which gave focus to the deliberations. La Francophonie, which was represented by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General and its Permanent Observer to the United Nations, thus presented a detailed document describing its views on conflict prevention, its institutional structure and its principles and priorities for cooperation with regional and international organizations. These principles and priorities include respect for the primacy of the United Nations, the establishment of agreed mechanisms for consultation, the prior division of tasks in order to avoid duplication of activities and rivalries in joint operations, and, lastly, the need to harmonize the activities of regional organizations and those of the world body.

11. On 10 and 11 December, la Francophonie also participated in New York in the expert-level follow-up meeting to the high-level meeting of 28 and 29 July. The follow-up meeting was mainly devoted to discussing the 13 proposals for practical modalities of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations which had been elaborated by the Department of Political Affairs on the basis of the high-level discussions that had taken place the previous July. An unofficial summary of the proposals made by the various participants for the implementation of these practical modalities was sent on 6 April 1999 to the

regional organizations concerned. A list of persons serving as liaison officers for matters concerning preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention was also prepared and circulated at the meeting of 10 and 11 December. The meeting identified approaches and examined proposals for joint action between the United Nations and la Francophonie in the field of conflict prevention.

12. Because of the active role which it is playing in the efforts of the international community to contribute to a settlement of the conflict in Burundi, la Francophonie was invited to participate in the consultations organized by the Secretariat and the Canadian Government held on 10 and 11 January in New York. These consultations, in which President Julius Nyerere, the mediator appointed by the region, a delegation of the Government of Burundi and representatives of the donor community also participated, reviewed the Arusha process, the humanitarian needs of the population of Burundi, and the prospects for a resumption of development cooperation activities once sanctions have been lifted.

13. La Francophonie also participated in the meeting on Guinea-Bissau which was convened in New York on 20 April 1999 by the Secretariat, pursuant to paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 1233 (1999), and chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. The purpose of the meeting was to examine ways in which the international community could support the peacekeeping force (ECOMOG), which had been deployed in Guinea-Bissau by ECOWAS. At the meeting, la Francophonie offered to provide the computer equipment and software needed by ECOMOG and to contribute to the electoral process in Guinea-Bissau. La Francophonie also participated in the follow-up meeting which was convened by the United Nations in Geneva on 5 May 1999, at which the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau and the Secretary-General of ECOWAS were present.

14. In implementation of the agreement on cooperation between the United Nations and la Francophonie and in the spirit of the meetings referred to in paragraphs 10 and 11 above, a high-level delegation from la Francophonie travelled to New York for three days of intensive consultations with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on a number of issues of common interest. The exchanges mainly concerned Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Guinea-Bissau, where la Francophonie and the United Nations have carried out activities, as well as Togo, where la Francophonie has a presence. These exchanges were in addition to regular consultations with the Office of the Permanent Observer of la Francophonie on issues and situations being followed by the two organizations.

15. Separate discussions took place with the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs and with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on cooperation in electoral assistance and electoral observation activities and in the strengthening of African peacekeeping capacities. La Francophonie has also participated in three electoral observation missions, under the aegis of the United Nations: in Cambodia, on 26 July 1998; in the Central African Republic, on 22 November and 13 December 1998; and in Nigeria, on 27 February 1999.

16. The recent biennial Summit of la Francophonie, which was held from 3-5 September 1999 at Moncton, New Brunswick (Canada), focused on the theme of youth. The Summit provided me with an opportunity to review with the Secretary-General of la Francophonie a number of issues on the agenda of the two organizations and to meet a number of persons who were present. Indeed, it brought together delegations from 55 member countries of la Francophonie, 40 of which were represented by their head of State or Government. The participants adopted a declaration and a plan of action, in which they reaffirmed the commitment of la Francophonie to peace, democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, linguistic and cultural diversity, education, economic cooperation and new information and communications technologies.

III. Cooperation in the economic, social and cultural fields and with the programmes and funds of the United Nations and its specialized agencies

17. Apart from the political aspects, which were dealt with in paragraphs 6 to 15 above, the cooperation agreement of 25 June 1997 deals with economic, social, scientific and cultural matters. In the United Nations system, most of these matters are dealt with by the programmes, funds and specialized agencies, several of which are linked to la Francophonie through separate cooperation agreements.

Department of Public Information

18. In the search for new modalities of cooperation, la Francophonie in late 1998 broadened its contacts with the Department of Public Information. The combined efforts of la Francophonie and the Department have already resulted

in fruitful and practical cooperation. Firstly, with respect to the development of Internet services in Africa, the Department of Public Information, represented by its Information Technology Section, and la Francophonie, represented by the Institut des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la formation (INTIF), organized a seminar in francophone West Africa to familiarize participants with the Internet and train them in its use. The seminar, on the theme "The Internet as a tool in the service of development", was held from 5 to 16 July 1999 at Abidjan. It brought together some 20 officials responsible for institutional communications working in the information and communications sector of ministries of education, information/communication or development in the nine francophone countries of the region. The participants were able to familiarize themselves with the resources offered on the Internet by the United Nations and by la Francophonie and to acquire technical training in the presentation of information on line. La Francophonie provided the necessary financial support for the organization and convening of the seminar, while the Department of Public Information was responsible for the preparation and delivery of most of the seminar's contents. A seminar Web site was created and a discussion list posted. Consideration is being given to the organization of similar events.

19. In addition, la Francophonie has concluded with the United Nations an agreement for the funding of an expert from a francophone developing country, who is a specialist in new information technologies. The services of the expert will be made available to the Information Technology Section of the Department of Public Information.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

20. UNESCO and ACTC signed a framework cooperation agreement in 1976 and an additional protocol in 1990, establishing permanent cooperation mechanisms through joint commissions to harmonize the activities of the two organizations in their member States. Since then, there has been close collaboration between the organs of la Francophonie and UNESCO, and cooperation with the International Organization of la Francophonie has blossomed during the period covered by this report.

21. The Association francophone d'amitié et de liaison (France) therefore proposed that UNESCO should award its 1998 International Simon Bolivar Prize to the Secretary-General of la Francophonie, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

22. L'Agence universitaire de la Francophonie financed the participation of eight French-language universities at the Forum UNESCO-University and Heritage meeting held in Melbourne, Australia, in October 1998. UNESCO, in turn, participated in the symposium on multilingualism in international organizations held in Geneva on 5 and 6 November 1998, which was organized by the General Secretariat of la Francophonie.

23. Among the general and regional history projects, the set of abridged versions in French of *The General History of Africa*, in eight volumes, was completed through the cooperative efforts of the Agency of la Francophonie, Editions EDICEF and UNESCO; the Agency also helped to finance this publication. Negotiations with the Agency are under way concerning the publication by Hachette and EDICEF of the French version in seven volumes of the new edition of the *History of Humanity: Scientific and Cultural Development*. The Agency has also contributed financially to the publication of the following titles: *Savoir lire et après. guide pratique illustré pour produire des matériels de lecture pour la postalphabétisation* (1996) and *Droits d'auteur et droits voisins* (1997).

24. UNESCO contributed, as it customarily does, to the organization of the Journée de la Francophonie, which takes place every year at UNESCO headquarters and was held this year on 22 March 1999.

25. UNESCO participated in the first Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance of la Francophonie, which took as its theme "Investment and trade" (Monaco, 14-15 April 1999). The Monaco Declaration adopted at that Conference reaffirmed principles which coincide in some respects with the guiding principles of UNESCO.

26. The Agency of la Francophonie contributed to the second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education organized by UNESCO in Seoul from 26 to 30 April 1999 and to the Inter-Agency Meeting on Priorities in Secondary Education Reform, held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 10 to 11 June 1999. Representatives of the two organizations met to plan follow-up to the resolutions adopted at those meetings.

27. The Agency of la Francophonie has expressed an interest in the UNESCO project of filming and distributing the adaptation of Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* directed by Roger Coggio; it would constitute an educational and cultural tool for encouraging non-violence and promoting the role of women as essential to a culture of peace.

28. Two training sessions for instructors in information and communications technologies were held in Libreville and Niamey from October to December 1998, with financial support from the Government of France, in cooperation with

the Association of Partially or Wholly French-Language Universities (AUPELF).

29. As part of its strategy of mobilizing new partnerships, UNESCO is collaborating with the International Assembly of French-Speaking Parliamentarians (AIPLF), consisting of representatives from over 59 national parliaments on the five continents, which serves as an advisory body to the Standing Council and to the heads of State and Government, or Summit, of la Francophonie. On 23 April 1997, the President of AIPLF (now the Advisory Assembly of la Francophonie) visited UNESCO headquarters. In addition, UNESCO attended the twenty-third regular session of AIPLF (Luxembourg, 9 July 1997); the AIPLF conference on the status of democratization in Africa (Libreville, 30 March-2 April 1998); the twenty-fourth regular session of AIPLF (Abidjan, 6-9 July 1998); and the twenty-fifth regular session (Ottawa, 5-8 July 1999), at which the Assembly adopted a recommendation concerning the French-language educational channel and expressly invited UNESCO to take part in the project.

30. UNESCO is currently exploring the possibility of signing a protocol of agreement with the International Organization of la Francophonie for the recruitment of young professionals from developing countries, who would be taken on by the International Organization of la Francophonie and seconded to UNESCO for a year. UNESCO is also contemplating involving la Francophonie in the organization of its annual film festival against exclusion and for tolerance and in creating cooperative arrangements for the distribution of teaching materials already existing in French and the translation into French and subsequent distribution of works published in other languages by UNESCO.

31. A joint project on the theme, "Women, young people and urban development: training and income-generating activities as a means of poverty reduction", is also being contemplated. If it comes about, it could be included under the framework agreement and additional protocol which UNESCO is planning to sign with la Francophonie.

32. At the suggestion of UNESCO, the theme, "Youth in the City" was adopted as the keynote theme of the nineteenth general assembly of the International Association of Mayors and Others Responsible for Partially or Entirely French-speaking Capital Cities or Metropolises (AIMF) (Quebec City, Canada, 1-3 September 1999) and was included on the agenda of the eighth Summit of Heads of State and Government of countries that use French as a common language (Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, 3-5 September 1999), which UNESCO attended.

United Nations Development Programme

33. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) duly noted General Assembly decision 53/453 concerning the transfer of observer status from the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACTC) to the International Organization of la Francophonie and recognized that the latter therefore succeeded to the rights and obligations deriving from the framework cooperation agreement which the Agency signed with UNDP on 2 October 1996. An exchange of letters between the Secretary-General of la Francophonie and the Administrator of UNDP underscored the common desire of the two organizations to work more closely together through both their headquarters and their local field offices. A joint UNDP-Francophonie committee is to meet in the fourth quarter of 1999 to assess the results of three years of cooperation since the signing of the framework agreement and to draw up guidelines for a new and stronger partnership.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

34. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has participated in a number of programmes instituted by la Francophonie. In particular, it has offered the services of specialists to give courses as part of Francophonie training programmes. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, met with the Secretary-General of la Francophonie at the latter's headquarters in Paris on 8 June 1999 and discussed with him ways of promoting closer cooperation between the two institutions and strengthening the implementation of their memorandum of agreement. Through its Permanent Observer Mission in Geneva, la Francophonie followed the debates of the fifty-third and fifty-fourth sessions of the Commission on Human Rights and let it be known that it considered the issues of the right to development and the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance scheduled for 2001 to be priority matters.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

35. La Francophonie was heavily involved in the Partners for Development Summit organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and held in Lyons, France, from 8 to 13 November 1998. Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of la Francophonie, addressed the participants on two occasions, on 8 and 11 November. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD was

invited in turn as guest of honour to the Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance of la Francophonie held in Monaco in April 1999. On that occasion la Francophonie signed a framework agreement with UNCTAD, under which the first joint activity was a seminar on investment, trade and economic development held in Evian, France, on 21 and 22 April 1999.

United Nations Children's Fund

36. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and ACTC signed a framework cooperation agreement on 26 October 1995 and adopted a cooperation programme on 1 October the following year. As a matter of priority, they decided to pool their expertise in basic education in activities in the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Guinea, Haiti, Mauritania, Senegal and Viet Nam. Special emphasis was placed on the education of girls and training of young women from the most disadvantaged classes. Constant efforts are made to ensure that the curricula and teaching aids used are appropriate to the social and cultural environment of each of these countries.

37. The projects benefit from the comprehensive approach to the complex of children-youth-women issues that has always characterized cooperation between ACTC and UNICEF and allows for better integration of social sectors and a measurable impact on the most vulnerable groups.

38. La Francophonie and UNICEF now regularly cooperate in advocating compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child in both developing and developed countries.

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

39. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) collaborates with la Francophonie through the Agency of la Francophonie in the execution of several projects, including:

(a) The international civil service training programme run by ACTC and UNITAR in conjunction with the International Institute for Public Administration (IIAP) and the Institute of International Relations of the Cameroon (IRIC), designed specifically for national officials from sectoral ministries of French-speaking developing countries and Central European countries. The seven-month training programme familiarizes participants with international public administration and multilateral mechanisms. It also offers practical experience in how international organizations function. Instruction is given in Yaoundé, Paris and Geneva over a period of four months. It is supplemented by three-month internships in international organizations;

(b) Creation of the French version of the CD-ROM, "Internet au Sud", conceived as an electronic library with a document base and instructions on various topics relating to the information society: the relevant technology, infrastructure, law and issues as they apply to the countries of the South;

(c) Joint organization of a programme for strengthening national capacity in information technology. The programme is in two parts: technical sessions and training sessions in Internet management and networking. The training is given in French-speaking Africa.

IV. Participation in conferences organized by the United Nations system

40. Since my last report to the General Assembly on cooperation between the United Nations system and the International Organization of la Francophonie, the latter has been represented at many conferences and meetings organized by the United Nations system. In addition to those already mentioned above, it participated in the preparations for the United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, held in New York and Rome in June and July 1998; the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, held in Paris on 6 October 1998; the sixth session at the ministerial level of the Commission on Sustainable Development; meetings of the preparatory body for the special session of the General Assembly devoted to countering the world drug problem together, held in June 1998; meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development scheduled for the year 2000; the ministerial meeting in September 1998 in follow-up to the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which was held in Bucharest in 1997; the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held in May 1998; the eighty-sixth session of the International Labour Conference in June 1998; and various meetings of the World Intellectual Property Organization in Geneva.

V. Observations

41. Cooperation between the United Nations system and la Francophonie embraces a growing number of areas of activity in which the two organizations share a common interest. It is characterized by a concern for complementarity and an awareness of their respective comparative advantages. The growing number of personal contacts and working meetings between officials of the United Nations and la Francophonie suggest that there will be a rapid broadening and deepening of their collaboration with a view to improving the efficacy of the efforts of both organizations.